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ABSTRACT

The initial form of the Coping with Death Scale consisted of 30 items designed to obtain responses arranged along a seven-point Likert-type scale. Each item on the scale was derived from personal responses of students who completed a death and dying seminar. The items appeared to fall into two categories: coping with self and coping with others. In conducting the refinement of the scale, it was administered to 100 college students selected at random. Results were factor analyzed, and four dimensions of coping ability emerged: Relating to Others About Death, Preparedness for One's Own Death, Coping with Personal Losses, and Knowledge of Funeral Arrangements. On the basis of the loading scores, five of the original 30 items were eliminated. The refined instrument consists of 25 items, scored on a five-point Likert scale, arranged around the four factors. The reliability was calculated as .88 using the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula. (BW)

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The Development and Refinement of The Coping With Death Scale

The interest of educators in the field of thanotology, the study of the process of dying and of death, has increased since the late 1960's with the publications of Kubler-Ross (1), Tulton (2) and Feifil (3), (4). With this growing interest of death and dying as a topic of educational study, journals like Omega and Death Education have been printed, classes, seminars, and study groups on death education have proliferated, and researchers have developed instruments to measure death concern (5), threat (6), death anxiety (7), fear of death (8), and attitudes toward death (9).

The results of the research efforts have not produced conclusive evidence on what type of curriculum and or instructional approaches produces less concern, less threat, less anxiety or less fear of death. Perhaps, death education courses cannot, or should not, be expected to produce decreases in these factors to any significant degree because they require long periods of tiem to develop. However, the courses may be able to improve attitudes and coping ability of individuals to deal with the process dying and death.

The Development of the Coping With Death Scale

The following description was annotated from the article Coping: Effects of Death Education by Larry A. Bugen (10). The initial form of the Coping With Death Scale consisted of thirty items designed to obtain responses arranged along a 7-point Likert-type scale. Each item on the scale was derived from personal responses of students who completed a death and dying seminar. Students were asked as part of a final examination to indicate "what they had gotten from the course which would justify continued instruction in this area." Thus, "I have a good perspective on death and dying," "I can express my fears

about dying," and "I am aware of the full array of services from funeral homes" became items on the instrument.

The items appeared to fall into two categories, namely, coping with self, and coping with others. Coping with self involved items relating to increased understanding, knowledge, and expressivity of emotions, whereas coping with others included items relating to increased abilities to communicate with and/or help the bereaved and terminally ill.

Reliability was not described, but content validity was ascribed to the scale because of the way in which the items were identified using student input.

Refinement of the Coping With Death Scale

In conducting the refinement of the Coping With Death Scale we administered it to 100 college students selected at random. Results were factor analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. From this analysis, four dimensions of coping ability emerged. These dimensions are (1) Relating to Others About Death, (2) Preparedness for One's Own Death, (3) Coping with Personal Losses, and (4) Knowledge of Funeral Arrangements. They are shown in Table 1.

Factor loadings, the correlation between the items and the factors, required greater than ± 0.3 to establish the interrelatedness of items when a varimax rotated factor matrix was developed. On the basis of the loading scores, five of the original thirty items were eliminated because they lacked the communality, shared variance in common with other items necessary to meet the 0.3 requirement.

The refined instrument consists of twenty five items, scored on a five point likert-type scale, arranged around the four factors. Table 1 shows

the arrangement of item by factor, while Table 2 is a listing of the refined Coping With Death Scale. The instrument contains a background information section in which respondents are to indicate certain demographic characteristics, for example, race, sex, religious preference, income range, and age range.

The reliability of the instrument was calculated using the Spearman Brown prophery formula:

$$r_{x_1x_2} = \frac{2r'_{x_1x_2}}{1+r'_{x_1x_2}}$$

Where $r_{x_1x_2}$= the estimated reliability of the entire test
$r'_{x_1x_2}$=the reliability of half of a test by means of the split-half technique.

This formula provides a measure of internal consistency because it estimates a coefficient of stability, thus, avoiding time-to-time fluctuation in estimating reliability (12). The reliability was calculated as .88 using the formula.

The instrument has content validity because it was evaluated by health educators who indicated that the items adequately described each of the four factors. Construct validity was also established using the factoral analyses when 73.2 percent of the total variance was accounted for by these factors.

The application of the analyses appears to have yielded an instrument that is valid and reliable and that can given a reasonable measure of coping ability toward death as reflected by the four factors. This will enable death educators who choose to utilize the instrument to have more confidence in their measures of ability to deal with the process dying and death.

Table 1
Factors and Item Assignment

Factor 1: Relating to others about death
- 5. I am aware of the full array of emotions which characterize human grief.
- 19. I know how to listen to others including the terminally ill.
- 20. I know how to speak to children about death.
- 21. I am able to spend time with the dying if I need to.
- 22. I can help someone with their thoughts and feelings about death and dying.
- 23. I would be able to talk to a friend or family members about their death.
- 24. I can lessen the anxiety of those around me when the topic is death and dying.
- 25. I can communicate with the dying.

Factor 2: One's own preparedness for death
- 1. I have a good perspective on death and dying.
- 7. I feel prepared to face my death.
- 8. I feel prepared to face my dying process.
- 9. I understand my death-related fears.
- 11. Lately I find it O.K. to think about death.
- 14. The qualify of my life matters more than the length of it.
- 15. I can talk about my death with family and friends.

Factor 3: Coping with personal losses
- 2. Death is an area which can be dealt with safely.
- 12. I can express my fears about dying.
- 13. I can put words to my gut level feelings about death and dying.
- 16. I know whom to contact when death occurs.
- 17. I will be able to cope with future losses.
- 18. I feel able to handle the death of others close to me.

Factor 4: Knowledge of funeral arrangments
- 3. I am aware of the full array of services from funeral homes.
- 4. I am aware of the variety of options for disposing of bodies.
- 6. Knowing that I will surely die does not in any way affect the conduct of my life.
- 10. I am familiar with funeral pre-arrangement.

Table 2
Coping With Death Scale*

Background Information

Please respond to the following items by checking the appropriate blanks in order that the group completing the instrument can be described. Do not sign your name. Thank you for your help in providing the information.

List the last four digits of your social security number. _____

1. Sex: Male _____ Female _____
2. Race: White _____ Black _____ Oriental _____ Other _____
3. Religious preference: Protestant _____ Catholic _____
   Jewish _____ Moslem _____ Atheist _____ Other _____
4. Income Range:
   Less than $4,999 per year _____
   $5,000 to $9,999 per year _____
   $10,000 to $19,999 per year _____
   $20,000 to $39,999 per year _____
   $35,000 and above per year _____
5. Age Range:
   18 to 25 years _____
   26 to 30 years _____
   31 to 40 years _____
   41 to 50 years _____
   51 to 60 years _____

*Permission to use the instrument must be obtained from the authors.

Instructions: Please respond to the following questions by circling the appropriate response at the right of the statement which best reflects your feelings toward the them. Your responses will remain confidential.

Key: SA - Strongly Agree
A - Agree
U - Undecided
D - Disagree
SD - Strongly Disagree

1.	I have a good perspective on death and dying.	SA	A	U	D	SD
2.	Death is an area which can be dealt with safely.	SA	A	U	D	SD
3.	I am aware of the full array of services from funeral homes.	SA	A	U	D	SD
4.	I am aware of the variety of options for disposing of bodies.	SA	A	U	D	SD
5.	I am aware of the full array of emotions which characterize human grief.	SA	A	U	D	SD
6.	Knowing that I will surely die does not in any way affect the conduct of my life.	SA	A	U	D	SD
7.	I feel prepared to face my death.	SA	A	U	D	SD
8.	I feel prepared to face my dying process.	SA	A	U	D	SD
9.	I understand my death-related fears.	SA	A	U	D	SD
10.	I am familiar with funeral pre-arrangement.	SA	A	U	D	SD
11.	Lately I find it O.K. to think about death.	SA	A	U	D	SD
12.	I can express my fears about dying.	SA	A	U	D	SD
13.	I can put words to my gut level feelings about death and dying.	SA	A	U	D	SD
14.	The quality of my life matters more than the length of it.	SA	A	U	D	SD
15.	I can talk about my death with family and friends.	SA	A	U	D	SD
16.	I know who to contact when death occurs.	SA	A	U	D	SD
17.	I will be able to cope with future losses.	SA	A	U	D	SD
18.	I feel able to handle the death of others close to me.	SA	A	U	D	SD
19.	I know how to listen to others including the terminally ill.	SA	A	U	D	SD
20.	I know how to speak to children about death.	SA	A	U	D	SD
21.	I am able to spend time with the dying if I need to.	SA	A	U	D	SD
22.	I can help someone with their thoughts and feelings about death and dying.	SA	A	U	D	SD
23.	I would be able to talk to a friend or family member about their death.	SA	A	U	D	SD
24.	I can lessen the anxiety of those around me when the topic is death and dying.	SA	A	U	D	SD
25.	I can communicate with the dying.	SA	A	U	D	SD

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